UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/C.5/47/29
27 October 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session
Agenda item 104

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Revised estimates under section 24, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. When adopting the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/185 C, section XVIII, of 20 December 1991, took note of the proposed priorities among subprogrammes under section 24, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), invited the Secretary-General to be guided by the work programme and the priorities recommended by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in implementing the programme budget, and stressed the importance of submitting new proposals in the context of the revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to assess the capacity of the Commission to fulfil its role for the strengthening of multilateral regional and subregional cooperation, having regard to the resources available in the Commission, and to propose measures for the strengthening of the Commission in the context of the revised estimates of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, taking into account the work programme of the Commission.

2. The changing circumstances and priorities of the region and, in particular, the process of transition of several centrally planned economies in the region to a market economy, including the newly independent Central Asian republics, some of which have become members of the Commission, have presented ESCAP with new responsibilities. The membership of the Commission increased by nine members and two associate members in 1992. The presence in the region of countries at varying stages of development, including some which have experienced a rapid growth momentum in recent years, has reaffirmed the need to strengthen regional cooperation. The challenges of the changing

socio-economic environment have placed heavy demands on ESCAP's capacity to respond to the different and emerging needs of the countries in the region, particularly by providing new policy options and appropriate national, subregional and regional strategies.

3. The capacity of ESCAP to address in a timely manner the new and emerging socio-economic issues and fulfil effectively its role in multilateral regional and subregional cooperation had been a concern of the Commission for some time. The Commission noted that in its early days, policy studies had been given importance because the Governments had needed that kind of assistance to formulate their development policies, but that the focus had gradually turned towards activities related to providing technical assistance. It also noted that, in view of the recent drastic political and economic changes in the region and in the world, Governments in the region were facing different challenges and problems and once again were in need of assistance in policy formulation.

4. An examination was begun in 1990 of the capacity of ESCAP to address the issues facing the ESCAP region in the context of, and relative to, global development trends, taking into account the diversity and size of the region, both in terms of area and population. A Group of Eminent Persons held several meetings to find ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of ESCAP. The Group was of the view that the structure of ESCAP had evolved largely on the basis of a sectoral approach and concluded that a thematic approach would now be more effective in dealing with the multisectoral and interdependent nature of the changing problems and issues in the region, stressing the need for strengthening the capacity of ESCAP for research and analysis as a priority. The Group's recommendations culminated in the adoption by the Commission of resolution 48/2 of 23 April 1992 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission and its subsequent approval by the Economic and Social Council (decision 1992/290 of 31 July 1992). The Commission considered that the adoption of a thematic approach, with the resulting streamlining of its subsidiary bodies, would emphasize regional economic cooperation and the interdisciplinary nature of the economic and social issues being addressed, provide a more comprehensive and coordinated approach in the timely implementation of activities and facilitate a more effective use of resources.

5. The themes proposed by the Commission and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1992/290 are: regional economic cooperation, the environment and sustainable development, poverty alleviation through economic growth and social development, transport and communications, statistics, and least developed, land-locked and island developing countries. Those themes, requiring a reorientation of the ESCAP programme of work, have been translated into a revised structure and content of programme 31 of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997.

6. The Committee for Programme and Coordination, at the first part of its thirty-second session, recommended to the General Assembly the approval of the revisions to programme 31, with the modifications as stated in its report

(A/47/16 (Part I), para. 87). The revisions of programme 31, with its thematic approach, will provide the framework for the programme budget for 1994-1995.

7. In the meantime, on the recommendation of the Commission, ESCAP has begun to take measures to enhance its capacity and to facilitate a smooth transition into its new thematic structure. As a result, the activities of ESCAP for the current biennium have already been partly reoriented to carry out work that would facilitate the deliberations of the restructured intergovernmental bodies, all of which will meet for the first time in 1993.

8. Against this background, additional needs have been particularly felt in 6 of the existing 15 subprogrammes, namely development issues and policies, environment, natural resources (including marine affairs), population, statistics and special programmes for the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries. These areas of work require the most urgent attention in terms of data collection, research and analysis for the purpose of providing a more informed understanding of the problems facing the countries in the region. It is also in these areas of work that assistance has been most requested by countries with disadvantaged economies as well as by those with centrally planned economies in the process of transition to a market economy.

9. In the light of these considerations, it would appear that the above-mentioned areas could usefully be strengthened through additional posts. However, without the benefit of the outcome of the ongoing review of the resources and mandates of the regional commissions and the overall restructuring of the economic and social sectors, it would seem premature to consider the establishment or redeployment of posts for ESCAP. Furthermore, the question of field representation of United Nations offices and programmes might also have implications for regional commissions. In this context, it is proposed to review with special attention the areas of activities referred to above at the time of the preparation of the 1994-1995 proposed programme budget, when the outcome of these reviews will be available. At the current stage, it is nevertheless considered desirable to provide ESCAP with additional resources for consultant services and travel in order to enable it to respond without delay to the most pressing demands from Member States in the above-mentioned areas.

10. The estimated additional resource requirements for the biennium for section 24 are indicated in paragraphs 11 to 21 below.

A. Revised estimates for subprogrammes 2, 4, 9, 10, 12 and 13

Subprogramme 2: Development issues and policies

11. Additional provisions for consultants in the amount of $8,000 would be required for expertise in the analysis of problems faced by the transitional economies and $12,000 for travel to establish contacts with the Governments concerned and to gather data for analysis. Table 1 below summarizes these additional requirements.

Table 1. Development issues and policies

Main objects of expenditure	Initial appropriations for 1992-1993	Increases	Revised estimates for 1992-1993
Established posts	1 404.5	-	1 404.5
Consultants	45.9	8.0	53.9
Ad hoc expert groups	23.3	-	23.3
Common staff costs	616.3	-	616.3
Travel of staff	46.9	12.0	60.9
External printing	72.0	-	72.0
	2 208.9	20.0	2 228.9

Subprogramme 4: Environment

12. Additional provisions for consultants in the amount of $6,000 would be required for expertise in the identification of institutional, legislative and financial mechanisms and cooperation for effective incorporation of the 1991 Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific 1/ into the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Agenda 21) 2/ for action at the regional level. Additional provisions for travel in the amount of $8,000 would be required for promoting subregional capacity-building and cooperation, particularly in reference to transboundary issues related to sustainable development. Table 2 below summarizes these additional requirements.

Table 2. Environment

Main objects of expenditure	Initial appropriations for 1992-1993	Increases	Revised estimates for 1992-1993
Established posts	486.6	-	486.6
Consultants	25.3	6.0	31.3
Common staff costs	213.6	-	213.6
Travel of staff	15.8	8.0	23.8
External printing	5.6	-	5.6
	746.9	14.0	760.9

Subprogramme 9: Natural resources (including marine affairs)

13. Additional resources for consultants in the amount of $6,000 are required for expertise to assist ESCAP in assessing the natural resource endowments of countries in the process of transition to a market economy and in the introduction of legal, administrative and economic regimes influencing the availability and use of mineral, water and energy resources. Additional resources for travel in the amount of $8,000 would also be required for fact-finding missions and consultations with Governments to support the work being undertaken in the region in response to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Table 3 below summarizes these additional requirements.

Table 3. Natural resources

Main objects of expenditure	Initial appropriations for 1992-1993	Increases	Revised estimates for 1992-1993
Established posts	1 711.0	-	1 711.0
Consultants	16.8	6.0	22.8
Ad hoc expert groups	19.9	-	19.9
Common staff costs	751.1	-	751.1
Travel of staff	43.2	8.0	51.2
External printing	59.5	-	59.5
	2 601.5	14.0	2 615.5

Subprogramme 10: Population

14. Additional resources for consultants in the amount of $6,000 for expertise would be required to assist ESCAP in developing appropriate population policies for the newly formed Central Asian republics. Additional travel resources in the amount of $3,000 are requested for fact-finding missions and consultations with Governments on population policy formulation and demographic data analysis, particularly in the Central Asian republics. Table 4 below summarizes the additional requirements.

Table 4. Population

Main objects of expenditure	Initial appropriations for 1992-1993	Increases	Revised estimates for 1992-1993
Established posts	873.4	-	873.4
Consultants	8.8	6.0	14.8
Ad hoc expert groups	18.3	-	18.3
Common staff costs	383.3	-	383.3
Travel of staff	34.2	3.0	37.2
External printing	14.2	-	14.2
	1 332.2	9.0	1 341.2

Subprogramme 12: Special programmes for least developed, land-locked and island developing countries

15. Additional resources for consultants in the amount of $8,000 would be required for expertise in development patterns, issues and prospects of Pacific island countries; an additional provision for travel in the amount of $10,000 is also requested for consultations with Governments, particularly on measures and policies to bring the island developing countries into the mainstream of the region's development. Table 5 below summarizes these additional requirements.

Table 5. Special programme for least developed, land-locked and island developing countries

Main objects of expenditure	Initial appropriations for 1992-1993	Increases	Revised estimates for 1992-1993
Established posts	455.3	-	455.3
Consultants	16.5	8.0	24.5
Common staff costs	199.9	-	199.9
Travel of staff	13.8	14.0	27.8
	685.5	22.0	707.5

Subprogramme 13: Statistics

16. Additional resources for consultants in the amount of $6,000 would be required for expertise to advise on the format and presentation of ESCAP statistical publications to make them more relevant to the new thematic approach. Additional resources for travel in the amount of $10,000 would also be required for consulting with and advising the statistical services in the transitional economies. Table 6 below summarizes the additional requirements.

Table 6. Statistics

Main objects of expenditure	Initial appropriations for 1992-1993	Increases	Revised estimates for 1992-1993
Established posts	1 262.8	-	1 262.8
Consultants	35.1	6.0	41.1
Ad hoc expert groups	13.7	-	13.7
Common staff costs	553.7	-	553.7
Travel of staff	30.3	10.0	40.3
External printing	69.7	-	69.7
	1 965.3	16.0	1 981.3

B. Summary of estimated net additional cost under the regular budget

1. Consultants

17. Additional requirements for outside expertise not available within ESCAP have arisen particularly in connection with activities associated with the countries that are undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, the response to Agenda 21 2/ and the specific problems faced by the least developed, land-locked and island developing countires. The additional resources requested in this respect amount to $40,000, against a total appropriation of $291,400 ($148,400 for the subprogrammes mentioned above).

2. Travel of staff

18. There is an urgent need for new, as well as reliable and comparable, statistics and data, particularly on the newly independent Central Asian republics and on the Pacific island developing countries. Additional requirements for travel to conduct fact-finding missions and consultations with Governments are estimated at $55,000, against an existing appropriation of $926,500, of which $184,200 was appropriated for travel directly related to the substantive subprogrammes mentioned above.

C. Contingency fund

19. It will be recalled that, under the procedure established by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and in effect starting with the biennium 1990-1991, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget. Under the same procedure, if additional expenditures are proposed that exceed resources available from the contingency fund, those activities can be implemented only through redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or modifications of projected activities. Otherwise, such additional activities will have to be deferred until a later biennium. A consolidated statement of all programme budget implications and revised estimates will be submitted to the Assembly towards the end of its current session.

20. No activities are proposed for termination, deferral, curtailment or modification in the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, in order to finance the activities proposed under section 24, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. In the event, therefore, that such resources are not available from the contingency fund, these activities would have to be postponed, as provided for in the criteria for the use of the contingency fund adopted by the General Assembly in the annex to its resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987.

D. Overall estimated net additional costs under the regular budget

21. On the basis of the above, the net additional costs for strengthening the capacity of ESCAP during the current biennium under the regular budget are estimated at $95,000. An additional appropriation of $95,000 for the biennium 1992-1993 under section 24 is thus proposed accordingly. The above additional requirements under section 24 are summarized by object of expenditure in table 7 below.

Table 7. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Main objects of expenditure	Initial appropriations for 1992-1993	Increases	Revised estimates for 1992-1993
Established posts	29 492.6	-	29 492.6
Temporary assistance for meetings	178.3	-	178.3
General temporary assistance	415.6	-	415.6
Consultants	291.4	40.0	331.4
Overtime and night differential	190.7	-	190.7
Ad hoc expert groups	171.2	-	171.2
Temporary posts	296.0	-	296.0
Common staff costs	13 069.1	-	13 069.1
Representation allowances	9.2	-	9.2
Travel of staff	926.5	55.0	981.5
Training	162.9	-	162.9
Contractual services	37.2	-	37.2
External printing and binding	290.3	-	290.3
Data processing services	315.1	-	315.1
Rental and maintenance of premises	678.6	-	678.6
Utilities	1 569.1	-	1 569.1
Rental of furniture and equipment	711.6	-	711.6
Communications	597.0	-	597.0
Official functions	14.6	-	14.6
Miscellaneous services	224.0	-	224.0
Supplies and materials	645.3	-	645.3
Furniture and equipment	1 318.7	-	1 318.7
Total	51 605.0	95.0	51 700.0

Notes

1/ A/CONF.151/PC/38, annex II, and A/CONF.151/PC/84, appendix II.

2/ See A/CONF.151/26, vols. I-III.